

LITERARY GEMS.

VOL. I.

THE SWEETS OF MANY A FLOWER.

NO. 12.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A NAUTICAL LIFE. No. II.

—there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. Pa. civ. v. 26.

"BESOM BOB," as he was familiarly styled on shore, but which it would have been dangerous to utter on board the *Circe*, was a remarkable man.—He was of the lowest origin in point of birth, his father being an itinerant dealer in brooms, in which mystery Robert himself had been initiated, and followed the business until he attained his twenty-third year. Happening to be seated one evening in a small ale-house in Whitby, where there chanced to be several seamen carousing, he listened with attention and admiration to the exploits which, over their cups, they related with all the boisterous mirth, and some of the exaggeration that deep potations are apt to engender. Gradually he became smitten with the desire to imitate their adventures, perhaps to go beyond them. He was a stout, athletic young man, and the stinging reflection all at once came across him, of the helpless, useless life he was leading, in a world, full of adventure. He determined to renounce the broom line of business, and betake himself to the deep.

Accordingly he went and offered himself as a landaman to one of the masters from his native port, and was accepted. His anxiety to learn his new occupation was incessant, his exertions ardent. At all times,—under all circumstances,—Besom Bob, for thus he was named from the beginning of his career, was to be found ready to execute any commands as far as his ability would reach,—and it was not long before that ability was great. From danger he never flinched,—from labor he never skulked,—he never was heard to complain,—and, accordingly, as is generally the case, he soon had not much to complain of. The young man's conduct was remarked with approbation by the commander, who determined to encourage him, and the ship having returned *full*,—a circumstance of most favorable omen among the superstitious race of sailors,—the young broom-man's destiny was thought to mixed up in the *good luck*, and it was resolved to secure that and its possessor together.

Besom Bob, then, was retained in the service of his first employers, by being sent on a voyage to Archangel, after his return from Greenland, and was propitiated in the next whaling expedition, by being put into the office of line-coiler—a duty of which, more hereafter. Success,—the most powerful proof of merit in most opinions,—still attended his steps; he became successively, boat-steerer, harpioneer, spikes-neer, mate, and in the almost incredibly short space of six years, the itinerant dealer in brooms was master of one of the finest whalers from the port of Whitby.

Nor did his good fortune forsake him. At the period of my entrance into his ship, he was about fifty years of age;—he had been twenty-two years in the command of whaling vessels, in which time it was remarkable that he never failed of a *full ship*,—he had never been beset in the ice,—he had never lost a man by an accident,—had never been wrecked;—nor had the impress,—that disgrace to the British service,—ever succeeded in taking from him one of his crew. *Good luck*, therefore, according to the popular belief, was peculiarly his, and no wonder, that the *very best* of seamen were ready to ship themselves under his command at lower wages than they could procure in other places. A prosperous voyage, are to the superstitious seaman worth securing at any rate. Thus, then, continued success provided him a superior crew on easy terms, and these in their re-action provided him success. His friends said "he was born with a

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To return to our voyage. In four days we reached the Shetland Isles, and anchored in Lerwick Sound. It is customary with the British whalers, to sail with the superior part of the crew only, from the English port, and engage natives of these islands at a lower rate of wages, for the purpose of manning the boats when the vessel is upon the "fishing ground." Here we received an additional force of forty men, which added to twenty-eight, with which number we sailed, made us in powerful strength. It was not my good fortune, however, to sail longer under the command of the gallant and fortunate Capt. Scoles, though I fell in with him again; for the "Hcheater," Capt. Bunting came into the Roads, and in a conference it appeared that he was short of boys; one of his apprentices having died just before he left Hull, and another ran away from him in Grimsby Roads. I was therefore called into the cabin, and after some little conversation, in which I was assured of the kind disposition of Capt. B., I was "lent" to him. Yes, dear H., whatever shock your delicate sensations may encounter at the use of such a word applied to a free human being, I was assuredly *lent* to him. That is to say, Capt. Scoles was responsible for my emoluments, on the footing of the original agreement, but Bunting was to have my services during the voyage, and to pay him for the same.

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WHALE FISHING.

The Hcheater was soon manned for the fishery, and we in our turn set sail for the Arctic Regions. As I intend to detail the business of whaling, perhaps I cannot take a better opportunity than the present of giving you some preliminary information. As soon as we had got clear to the north of Shetland, all the boats were hoisted out, to be fitted with the necessary gear, and suspended in places most convenient for lowering into the sea, at any hasty necessity. The following was the order of their situations. There was one, outside of each gangway, two at each quarter, and one over the stern. These were all provided with rope grommets instead of row-locks for the oars, and a mat underneath each oar, upon the boat's gunwales; all was well greased in order to enable the boat's crew to row with silence. Next, the whale lines were brought out and coiled, cable-fashion, and in smooth files, in the line-tub, in the after part of the boat; each boat carried from four to six lines of one hundred and twenty fathoms each, spliced together into one length. The whale-line consisted of rope extremely supple, and strong, being made from long hemp picked for that purpose. A few fathoms nearest the outer end were without tar, and were perfectly soft and pliant, but very strong; this latter was firmly attached to the harpoon, at the shank. The latter instrument consisted of an iron head doubly barbed, about six inches long, and five wide, but flat, and about three quarters of an inch thick in the strongest part; the shank or

socket was in one part with the barb, about two feet long, and into the socket was fixed a wooden shank about six feet long. This instrument was always kept bright and clean, it lay in the boat's bow, close to the harpioneer's seat in rowing, and ready to be snatched up by him at any moment. Near the boat's stern also was a strong circular piece of wood, firmly fixed, called the bollard, round which the harpioneer frequently took a turn with the whale-line, when a fish was struck, thereby compelling him to drag the boat and its contents, thus fatiguing him with the labor, whilst the pain of the instrument was assisting to bring about his death. The bollard being round and smooth, it was easy to give out portions of line at the judgment of the harpioneer, and to hold on, or throw it off altogether, whenever he should think fit. Besides the harpoon there are always two or three lances in each boat, for the purpose of being plunged into a vital part of the fish when he is weary, weak, and dying. The lances are commonly used by such boats as come late up to the whale, and when the fish has already been struck by three or more harpoons from different boats, and the object is to dispatch him. A staff with a small white or colored flag is in each boat, to be hoisted whenever a fish is struck, to denote that they are fast to him, and to demand assistance. A small swab, for the purpose of wetting the boat's gunwale when the line is running out with such rapidity, and thus prevent its taking fire, completes the equipment of each boat, excepting a spare oar or two, in the event of any damage to those actually in use. Every precaution is taken to procure celerity and silence, and no unnecessary words are to be uttered.

The following is the order of the people composing a boat's crew in this service; first, the harpioneer whose place is always in the boat's bow, in other words, he always rows the foremost oar; and he is ready to throw in his oar and catch up his harpoon when he shall see occasion to do so. Next to him in the boat is some smart dexterous fellow who can promptly obey the orders of the harpioneer, and render him any assistance he may desire,—but this man is not what is called an officer. After him there are two, sometimes three Shetland men, of whom nothing is required but that they row steadily, strongly and silently, and be prompt to back the boat off or urge it on, as the harpioneer shall direct. The last of the rowers is the line-coiler, whose duty it is to be ever attentive to his lines; to see that they run out smooth and even, because as they sometimes run very rapidly, at the least irregularity a slight catching any part of the boat, might be the cause of her destruction with that of all the crew. When, therefore, the harpioneer lays in his oar to seize his harpoon, the line-coiler also lays in his, to watch his lines: and if, in spite of his utmost care, the rapidity with which the fish runs should drag the whole or a part of a shave out of his line-tub, he instantly gives notice, and the harpioneer with a sharp hatchet cuts the line and lets the fish go, with so much of the line and harpoon with him, as he has dragged out. The last man in the boat is the boat-steerer,—a very important office he holds. I need scarcely inform you that whale-boats are carvel-built, and have the stem and stern both alike. The boat-steerer always stands up in the stern, and instead of a rudder he has a very large oar, called the *steer-oar*, the power of which in his hands is such, as to enable him to turn the boat either to right or left with great readiness. He must have his eyes constantly fixed on the object, and use his own best judgment, except when receiving the orders of the harpioneer, whose word indeed is *law* on these occasions. All these preparatory measures being taken, the boat's crews appointed, and the ship's com-

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pany divided into three watches, we proceeded with all despatch to the scene of our projected exploits, and as the season was not yet far advanced, it was deemed advisable to make towards "the west ice," as it is called, in order to catch a few seals, before proceeding towards Spitzbergen to the regular fishery.

But I must describe to you our *personal equipments*, for, as it may serve as a model to the beaux in Broadway, and certainly would have attracted the attention of the belles, it were a pity to consign it to oblivion. Whatever might be thought of the quality of the *wool-len*, there certainly was no heart-burning on the score of *fine linen*, for here clean linen *was not*. Every person, from the captain to the sweeper, wore a flannel shirt, over which was a Guernsey frock or vest of the stocking fabric, fitting tight to the body and arms. We were incased in two pair of woollen stockings, the like of woollen drawers, a pair of huge heavy boots, covering the entire lower limbs, woollen or canvas trousers, a jacket, and over that a large pee-jacket, two pair of woollen mittens, and, the crowning point of elegance, a worsted wig, with a long tail of either worsted or thrums, over which was a fur cap. At this time also the general rule began to be enforced, that every one should sleep in his stockings and drawers, and the remaining part of his attire [be] laid in a becket, or piece of cord with a slip knot, to keep them together. The reason of this last precaution, I found was, that in the event of "a fall" being called, which means, a fish being successfully struck, every one jumping out of bed, runs half undressed as he may be, with his clothes in his becket, into his proper boat; after putting off, the harpiner throws in his oar and finishes his dress; after him, the boat-steerer, and soon in succession, one at a time, till they are all dressed; and thus no time is lost.

It is curious to observe the prejudices of unlettered seafaring men; the ship's company being now divided into three watches, there were of course sixteen hours exemption from duty, and eight hours upon deck. I was not able to sleep so many hours, and therefore, in my watch below, as it is called, I attempted to beguile some part of the time in reading, having brought a few books with me; but the attempt was laughed at in the first place, and afterwards I received peremptory orders to "bottle off all the sleep I could get, as I should certainly want it before we should see Shetland again." Such was the reasoning of these men, who could alternately employ themselves for sixty or seventy hours in an arduous, dangerous, and disgusting occupation, or sleep at the rate of sixteen hours a-day. I was obliged to comply, and spent many an uneasy hour awake in my bed, that might have been profitably employed.

At length we reached the "west ice;" a scene here broke upon my view of which I had no previous conception. From the mast head was [seen] an immense extent of floating ice, all in patches, broken, disjointed; pieces here and there artificially, or rather apparently, joined together by snow, and at intervals a dark narrow streak of clear water, probably made by vessels forcing their way among the masses. There were several Dutch ships among the ice, and the boats' crews from which were employing themselves in "sealing," which I discovered to be a most exhilarating amusement to the seamen, as well as profitable to the owners. We prepared for the sport, Captain Bunting as eager as the very boys themselves, and he took me with him in his own boat.

SEALING.

The mode of killing seals, at this part of the season, is as follows: each boat is provided with a number of clubs, about three feet long, the upper end having a thick knob, and a short iron hook fastened upon it. There are also several tin horns or trumpets in the boats. The seals lie in great numbers upon the masses of ice, and are a stupid race; upon the approach of a boat to the places where they are basking, the crew sound their horns, or make horrid shouts, and

discordant noises; the animals erect their heads, open wide their eyes and mouths, and are utterly confounded; before they can recover their consternation the men jump on the masses of ice where they are, and still roaring at them, run up, give them a sound knock on the nose, which kills them instantly, and then sticking the hook in their heads, drag them to the boat, which is moved about from place to place by a boy as the men shift their places.

At first I was stationed as boat-keeper, but, upon my intreaty, I was allowed to try my skill,—and a pretty trial it was. A fine fat fellow was my intended victim; I approached, "*secundem artem*," but not knowing the identical seat of his mortality, I struck him on the neck, and the gentleman scuttled away from me instantly at a notable rate. I ran after him, and tried to hit him again with the hooked side of the knob, in vain,—I produced no effect: he was getting near the edge of the ice;—I stooped like a booby, to get hold of his fin or "flipper," when he raised it up, struck me forcibly on my face, vanished, and at the same time knocked me into the water. My first impulse was to lay hold of the ice, and then I roared lustily, being apprehensive that another piece might come in contact with the one that held me, and crush the life out of me. The boat, however, was soon round to me, and I was rolled in and carried off to the ship, when a glass of grog was administered by the "doctor," and a change of garments by myself. But many a jeer I had to sustain for allowing myself to be knocked down by a seal, and for losing my club.—"Lubber," and "die-hard," were the mortifying terms applied to me, until I was able to wipe out that stain upon my honour and skill.

We remained a week at the west ice, during which time we killed about fifteen hundred seals. These were a valuable foundation of the fishery, the fat of those animals being very excellent; and, upon boiling, it yields nearly its whole quantity in oil, whereas the fat of the whale only boils to about two thirds. The skins also are worth much for leather.

And now we made sail for the "east ice," where our main fishery was to commence. The crow's nest was rigged, and the Jacob's ladder. The former of these conveniences consists of a place fitted up, in the main-topmast cross-trees, screened round with canvas, and containing a telescope; and its use was for the officer of the watch, or any other person sent aloft, to protect them from the cold whilst looking around for the appearances of fish, or the state of the navigation among the ice. From the crow's nest the Jacob's ladder was fixed, reaching up to the mast head itself, thus allowing a still more extensive, though momentary view.

Every eye now began to be strained, in hopes of being the first to discover a fish; we had arrived in the latitude of 75 deg. N., the bran-boats were ordered out, consisting of half the "watch on deck," and all was eagerness, suspense, and watchfulness. For my own part, my utter ignorance of this part of the business, and my anxiety to see and know every thing, effectually prevented me from "bottling off" sleep, according to the ritual; in fact I slept none.

The important moment at length arrived—disastrous indeed in its consequences. The wind was blowing very fresh from the northeast, so much so, that it was hardly prudent to have a boat out. Still the anxiety for a commencement was so great, and the long delay hitherto had been so vexatious, that Captain Bunting would not allow a single chance to be lost. Suddenly there was a hailing from the crow's nest, of a fish on the weather-beam. Instantly the bran-boat pulled away for him—came up with him—struck him! Up went the boat's jack, or flag,—a fall, was loudly and exultingly called through the ship,—the people thronged to their respective boats, to go and finish the exploit—when, miserable fate!—all at once jack and boat disappeared. There was a cry from the ship—a

helpless cry—when presently she was seen again, with her keel uppermost. After some farther lapse a figure was seen at each end of her. After much hard pulling, the other boats came up to the unfortunate one that had been capsized, and soon all but one began to return towards the ship. They brought with them two men half frozen to death, and the boat which had been upset.

It seems that they had not been able to reach the shoulder of the fish, which is always the most desirable spot, and that the harpiner, in his eagerness, had cast the harpoon instead of striking it; it held however, but the heaving of the sea, and the confusion in backing off to get clear of the fish's tail, had caused the line-coiler to be remiss in his attention to the lines. The whale dragged them out with astonishing rapidity, running directly in the wind's eye, when, unfortunately, part of a sheave of the coil came forth, and getting entangled in some part of the boat, it was upset in an instant. In this condition it was dragged by the infuriated animal at a great rate, but not very long; for the line broke, and the fish escaped with the harpoon in his body. Four of the unfortunate men in the body of the boat were overwhelmed by it, and were drowned. The harpiner and the boat-steerer being at the extremities, were thrown clear off, and were enabled to get to her again when the line broke. They got upon the keel, where they remained till their shipmates picked them up. The lives of these two men were indeed saved, but they had been so long exposed to cold, that they never recovered perfectly during the remainder of the voyage. In another hour the remaining boat returned, bringing the lifeless bodies of the luckless line-coiler and one of the crew; the other two were never found.

This was but a melancholy mode of beginning our fishery, and I confess I was more awe-struck by this scene, than by any former mishap that had befallen me. Its consequences also were a series of mortification to me. The fact was, that the unfortunate boat was the one to which I was appointed; I had only left her with the others of my companions—being relieved—a short time before the misfortune took place. The next time I appeared on deck, I was called by the spikesner, who was the officer of the watch, and the following dialogue took place:—

"I say, youngster, want' you cast away, coming from Americky?"

"No, not just cast away,—the ship was lost, but we were safe in the boats, and well towards shore before she struck."

"Well, that's much the same thing, I reckon.—What the d—l sent you to sea then, a'ter such a go as that there?"

"I had so very strong an inclination long before, that nothing could subdue it, and my uncle was so decidedly set against it, that I do believe his opposition, rather strengthened my determination than otherwise?"

"Do you know, I'm mainly afraid you're a scape grace, and that you'll be unlucky to the ship. There couldn't be no good to no one to leave a ship that Besom Bob commands, I'm sartain. By — I half believe they've lost a Jonah, and we've got'n."

"I don't know how that could be. I had no hand in leaving the Circe, I only obeyed orders."

"Ah, that may be, but the black mark was upon you. I've been just a thinking as you belong to my boat, what the poor lads has been lost in this morning. Now, if so be as you be an unlucky un, 'twont be long before we finds it out; and if it turns out so, I'll be — if you sets foot again in a boat with me."

My heart was full at this bitter reflection upon my fortunes, and I could not readily reply to the honest seaman upon this declaration; he perceived, however, that he had hurt me, and good naturedly went on to say:

"Well, P. my lad—you can't help it, you know, if

it is not your luck. But you can't blame no one, what wants to save his own bacon. Keep a good heart my lad, many a taught gale has been weathered by keeping the spirits a good luff."

I promised to do so, but felt, nevertheless a depression and misgiving, which, even my own better education could not surmount.

In a day or two more, there was another "fall" called; a fish was struck from one of our boats, and successfully held on. Two others came up with him in succession, and also effected their purpose of fixing harpoons in him. We were in the fourth boat that came up. He was an immense monster, indeed of the largest size, and was just then in the height of his fury; the spikesman struck him, when down went the fish with the speed of lightning,—his dreadful tail brandished in the air, shaking in agony,—with it he struck the starboard side of our boat. He did not indeed hit any person, but he shivered the boat to splinters on that side, from stem to stern, and laid us all adrift in the water. Fortunately, there were other ships in the vicinity; and as it is a regulation for each ship to help a neighbour to kill a fish, if not otherwise engaged on their own account, we were soon picked up by another boat's crew, which proved to be one belonging to the *Circe*.

When they found there was no great harm done, the lads of the *Circe* began to jeer me exceedingly, as they were taking us to our ship.

"Ah, P., you unlucky d—l," cried one, "this is just the sort of situation for you. A pretty ducking you've brought on the boat's crew,—and well it's no worse. — me, if I'd have you in a boat with me, tho' you be a good fellow enough.—But there's no luck in you I'll be sworn."

You may be sure, all this was not thrown away upon my fellow-sufferers, who all attributed their mishap to my being in the boat. In the meantime, the business of killing the whale went on. He died very hard; fighting and fluttering to the last, and his death was not accomplished under eleven and twelve hours of time. You are aware that in the Polar seas, there is perpetual daylight during the summer months,—hence there was no time lost in flinching this monster of the deep. Accordingly the funeral procession, as we may call it, was seen advancing slowly towards the ship, towing the huge fish by the tail, till they got him alongside; and now commenced the most disagreeable part of this dirty trade.

The fish being laid alongside, is fastened to two powerful tackles, at head and tail, and the harpooners go upon him with large knives in their hands, the blade and handle being together about six feet in length. They have "spurs" or iron spikes strapped to the soles of their boots, to prevent them from slipping off the side of the fish, and commence the operation of taking all the fat from him. It lies outside, immediately under the skin, and is commonly from ten to eighteen inches thick. By means of a slip which they cut at each end of the animal, they turn him over by degrees, and still keep cutting from the upper surface, until they have cut all round. It is hoisted in meanwhile, in large pieces, by means of the capstan and a crab,—the larger pieces are cut into smaller ones, of somewhat more than a cubic foot each, and are then thrown loose into the hold to be drained of water or any other fluid,—all this takes up a great many hours, and the people are always much fatigued by the time it is ended. But this is not all, for in two or three days, all this fat or "blubber" is thrown upon deck again to be cut into long thin slips, that may be put into the bung-hole of a cask,—this is called "making off," and is the last stowage of the blubber, and the last trouble with it, until at the end of the voyage, it is taken to the boiling house.

It was now no longer a question in the ship, that I was unlucky. My friend, the spikesman, made a formal remonstrance against me, and declared he would

not go out again in the same boat with me. So also said the rest of the boat's crew. I was therefore ordered always to remain with the ship, when a fall was called,—together with the cook, two or three landsmen, and the doctor. By the way you may have observed that the latter functionary has not been mentioned by me, with any particular respect,—and the reason is this. The Greenland ships are allowed particular privileges and bounties by the English government, on account of its being such an excellent nursery for seamen; but one part of their charter consists in their carrying in each vessel, a surgeon rated on their books. Now such a personage not being deemed necessary by the magnates of the trade, except as securing them their immunities, they have generally invested some cobbler, or other low person, with the dignified title; but his real occupation on board was to tell jokes to the skipper, cook pancakes for him, serve the mess-bottles on Saturday night, or during the flinching and making off, and lend a hand in trimming the sails when the crew were away upon a fall. Latterly indeed the progress of science has enabled these "learned pundits" to bleed, if necessary, and—to go aloft into the crow's nest.

Great was my mortification at this kind of slight,—but I had a consolation in seeing all that was curious in the region of ice and monsters; the navigation of the ship, particularly was very interesting;—the nicety with which she was steered between huge lumps that threatened destruction to her bows, notwithstanding the ice-knees with which she was guarded without.—The view also from the mast-head was magnificent; sometimes consisting of a number of patches, among which it was necessary to steer carefully, in order to arrive at a spot where a whale was seen blowing; sometimes of an immense floe, by which is meant one complete body of ice of many miles in diameter; and sometimes an ice-field was before us, that is a mass of ice, of which its boundaries could not be traced even from the mast-head.

The fishing went on with tolerable success. And a bear was shot, and sometimes a narwhal or sea unicorn was killed. The latter besides giving very fine fat, yielded a species of ivory, its horn being spiral, pure white, and heavy. Some of the horns were even ten feet long; and it was usual to have them polished and made into bed-posts in Hull. Towards the end of the season, a fish had been struck, and took a great deal of killing; the ship had gradually neared the boats, and at length Captain Bunting ordered the topsails to be clowed down, and jumping into the jolly boat, ordered four of us to follow him, and went to assist in lancing. The whale was by this time so weakened, and so nearly dead, that he alternately sunk a little below the surface of the water, and rose again. We pulled for his side-fin, when just as we were nearing him he sunk again, and before we could back off, rose again immediately beneath us, raising boat and men upon his back, and canting us all into the water. There being no other harm done, it created a hearty laugh all round as they picked us up,—still, however, when they came to me it was "Ah, P. you unlucky dog, what d—l sent you into the boat?" There could be no better luck if you were there." The fish was soon despatched, and having got him in, Captain B. bore up for the southward, intending to proceed on the homeward voyage.

I have omitted to say, that in counting the number of the harpooners in each ship, the master and the mate are each one. But as circumstances may and frequently do arise, which make it improper for both these officers to be absent from the ship at the same time, there is always a person, rated as a boat-steerer, but an aspirant for the office of harpioneer, who officiates for either of those principals, and is called the loose harpioneer. I mention this, as introductory to the account of my final disaster in the good ship "*Ilchester*," and certainly confirmatory of the impressions received of me.

The accident which I have now to describe conducted me for ever from that vessel;—it was the conductor that led directly to all my future adventures,—it was attended with a catastrophe unfortunate enough to some that were included in it, and seemed to be the winding up of my character on board the *Ilchester*, as an unlucky wight, carrying mischief and misfortune to all who came within the sphere of my action. And here I cannot help pausing, to admire the apparent strangeness of my destiny. I neither do nor ever did believe in *luck*, yet through a remarkable concurrence of untoward though sometimes unimportant events, most of my acts were attended with either mischief or misfortune,—seldom such a thing took place, in which I was not included, till at length I became shunned, dreaded, deemed either like an evil genius, that blasts and injures wherever he appears, or else a cast-away doomed to destruction, and hurtful to any connexion he may form.

We had arrived into the latitude of about 74 deg. and were despairing of seeing any more fish, when one afternoon, a loose fall was called, which signifies that all the boats are to be sent out in any direction they think best, but keeping an eye on each other. This is done upon occasions when many fish are visible, and none stationary. Captain Bunting being willing, as he said, to give me one more chance (of luffing up out of the eddy,) sent me into the boat with the loose harpioneer;—we were not long before we got into a regular chase, now coming up with our game, then left in the lurch by his plunging below and running ahead; but ever leaving a greasy streak by which we could trace his course. Twice we were so near that the loose harpioneer cast his instrument,—the first time he missed him,—upon the second occasion it struck, but being so far off, it did not hold,—and away the monster started with redoubled speed. Again we pursued in his wake, with an eagerness proportioned to the difficulty, and for the sake of our harpioneer who was much esteemed in the ship, and whose character would be much enhanced by his success. Still the fish ran and stopped alternately, chafing our tempers to the extent of our patience, but never giving a fair opportunity to attack him. Unhappily our over-anxiety caused us to forget both the ship and the other boats, and it was not till we were all nearly worn out, and in despair of success, that we began to look about us. Ship or boat there was none to be seen. We were all struck with consternation,—what was to be done?—which way should we pull to fall in with them again? So devious had been our course in the pursuit, that we know not how the ship ought to bear from us,—we did not even know how long we had been engaged, for having no night, the time of day was deceptive.

We resolved finally to lay on our oars, in the persuasion that we must have been watched from the ship, and that they would drop down to us;—this relieved us for a time; forgetful that the other crews might have been equally intent on their sport, and that she could not pick us all up in different directions. A west in the ship's ensign was the usual signal of recall, but no one had even thought of recall, or of looking at the ship, during the excitement.

After waiting a long time, every minute of which was centupled in our uneasy minds, no ship appeared, but something worse threatened us. A fog began to settle upon the surface of the water, at first thinly, but gradually becoming more and more dense. Our state now became perilous. We were on the wide Arctic ocean, without provisions, without shelter, without a guess as to the route we should take; surrounded by the obscurity of a fog, and liable to be run down by any vessel,—even our own, before we could be aware. Bitter were my feelings under these circumstances, for well I knew that if relief did not reach us before long, the weight of their indignation would fall upon me, and I might even be made a sacrifice, to their prejudices, their rage, or even their wants. Silently but fer-

vently did I pray for extrication from this woful predicament. I avoided making myself noticed by word or deed,—but in vain, a superstitious Shetlander, remarked, that P., the *unlucky*, was in the boat, and therefore it was no wonder we were in danger of perishing. The cry being raised against me, every throat poured forth volleys of abuse upon me, "unlucky lubber," "—cur," "cursed Yankee," fell in torrents upon my devoted head, and I have not a doubt, that the resolution would have been taken to save their lives by ridding the world of a Jonah, if they had not been obliged to employ the horns and their voices, in hailing continually, to prevent being run down, or to make our distresses known. Gradually hunger and thirst were added to fatigue and apprehension. There were two barrels of fresh water, and a bottle of rum in the boat. The harpiner allowed a little to each, but when I in my turn approached, I was saluted with, "no, infernal dog—die and be ——" I retreated in dismay, for I found not a pitying eye to commiserate my undeserved sufferings. But though they allowed me nothing wherewith to sustain me, they omitted not to make me take my share of the fatigue. I was set to blow the horn, and was reminded that as I had brought the boat's crew into the predicament, the least I could do was to endeavor to get them out of it. I obeyed, though with difficulty, for my strength was nearly gone; but the fear of my own companions, whose savage looks gave power to my lungs, enabled me to blow a few blasts, and shortly after I had commenced, a large dark mass was dimly seen looming through the fog, shapeless in appearance, but close at hand.—*Am. Monthly Mag.*

THE TWO LETTERS.

[Translated from the French.]

Amelia de Beaufort was sixteen. She was yet at the boarding school; her father came one day to see her and said, "I congratulate you, I am about to marry you, Amelia." She almost jumped for joy.

"Shall I have a carriage, an opera box?"

"Undoubtedly."

Amelia threw herself upon her father's neck, and then, with indifference asked the name of her intended: for *that* at Paris, is the last thing a fashionable young lady cares about.

"He is," replied M. de Beaufort, "the Count d'Orsini, a Corsican of distinction; his age, forty; a superb man, possessed of a very considerable fortune, and no heirs; does that suit you?"

"I am all obedience, father; but he is a well bred man I hope."

He begged me to hand you the marriage presents previously to himself being introduced to you, and that, I think, is a proof of good breeding."

The giddy girl gave an approving smile and hastened to examine the presents he had sent her. The splendour of the dresses, and the exquisite taste displayed in their selection, spoke favorably for Count d'Orsini. A fortnight afterwards Amelia de Beaufort had changed her name.

This is the way that marriages take place in Parisian good society.

The Count was amiable, and gallant. He captivated Amelia by his wit, polished manners, and the facility with which he yielded to all her caprices; he however could only obtain her friendship and esteem; there was something about him that repelled love. A perpetual constraint appeared to shackle all his motions. Amidst his most tender endearments, a sudden reminiscence would seem to dart through his mind, and his eyes terrified you by the intensity of their gaze. He apparently wished to dive into your

inmost thoughts to detect any suspicion that might be lurking against him.

Polite and obliging to every body, he yet could gain no one's confidence.

A singular custom of the Count contributed to stifle in Amelia's bosom the germ of tenderness, by filling it with superstitious dread. He scarcely ever allowed himself to be surprised by day-light in the conjugal bed; at the first ray that penetrated the apartment he arose; and with a look of anxiety hastened to fly the couch where a few minutes before he pressed his young wife to his bosom. When the Countess had asked him the motive of so strange a habit he answered: *it was a vow*; but his countenance became so gloomy that the question was never repeated.

A thousand sinister ideas floated through the Countess' mind and froze her blood. Why all this extreme care to keep his shirt closed around his throat, and never to expose his arms or shoulders? she puzzled herself with a hundred different conjectures. Predisposed to horrors, from reading the new novels, there were moments when she thought her husband's body covered with ulcers and frightful sores; at other times impressed by the satanic legends of the middle ages lately revived upon the stage, she went so far as to think the *vow* he had made was a compact with the devil and that himself—one night she uttered a dreadful scream, as she thought she felt he had claws instead of fingers.

But during the day she forgot all this; the count was so good, so handsome; happy in being rich, and an object of admiration, she passed her whole time in a vortex of pleasure; her life was a perpetual motion. Sure symptoms of maternity gave additional charm to her brilliant and varied existence. She became habituated to the singularity of her position, and seeing her husband make a display of devotion, she no longer doubted his sincerity. *It is a vow*, thought she, some superstition of his country—meantime she willingly would have penetrated its motive—she was gratified but too soon!

She was in her seventh month, when one hot summer's day she found the count asleep upon the sofa; his coat was thrown upon a chair near by; his half open shirt collar hung loosely down and allowed a view of his bare neck. All the fancies that had thronged through her brain during the night forcibly recurred to her. Trembling as though she were about to commit a crime, she noiselessly approached, and scarcely daring to breathe she gently raised the linen that hid from her eyes a dreadful mystery!

Poor woman! what a shriek! she sunk fainting at the Count's feet, who starting awoke, and hastened to assist her. By degrees her senses returned, and she opened her eyes. But she again closed them with horror as she saw herself in the Count's arms. The latter was unconscious of her new feelings towards him and knowing his wife to be subject to nervous attacks since her pregnancy, he naturally ascribed them to that cause.

From that period they had separate beds; the Count at first made some opposition, and was astonished at what he considered a mere whim; but his wife's health becoming every day worse and worse, he congratulated himself with having yielded to her wishes.

Madame d'Orsini fell into a state of marasmus and melancholy which soon became alarming, and for which the most celebrated physicians were consulted.

They all agreed that her dangerous condition was produced by some mental affliction, and was unconnected with her pregnancy; but none of them could wring the secret from her.

Her term approached. It was feared she had not strength sufficient to go safely through the trial. Her friends were in the utmost alarm on her account. The count partook of their apprehensions, for he loved Amelia passionately.

He had attached himself to her as to a guardian angel. Marrying in some measure to escape from himself, he had hoped to find in his young wife's endearments an oblivion of his past life: he had thought that innocence like divine honey would flow from his companion's pure lips upon his own, and that her caresses would lighten his breast of the burden of remorse:—his illusion had almost been realised.

The critical moment had come. The countess then enjoined her husband to leave the room; he attributed this to a fear she might entertain that her sufferings would distress him, and the idea redoubled his love for her. Restless and agitated he wandered the whole night around her apartment. At last a loud and piercing cry announced to him he was a father, and he rushed to enfold his child in his embrace.

What a scene! great heaven! His child was dead, strangled in the convulsive grasp of its mother, who as she herself breathed the last sigh, exclaimed in a heart-rending voice, her eyes fixed upon her babe's shoulder—the letters—he has them also!

Count d'Orsini, or rather Amelia's husband, for the authenticity of his name and title has been questioned, seeing the two terrible letters T. F. imprinted upon his son's shoulder, recalled to recollection the fainting fit that had preceded his wife's illness, and comprehended all. It is said he mechanically lifted his hand to his shoulder, and shuddered as though he again felt the searing of the hot iron!

The bystanders were motionless with horror.—Next day the Count had disappeared, and has never been heard of since.

Legislators! you who had marked him with an indelible stigma—you who make infamy survive its punishment, honor to ye! restored to society, and to virtuous feelings, this man, had your hand not branded him, might have tasted and bestowed happiness in the bosom of his family, and in the intercourse of friendship; but you had interposed betwixt him and the world the seal of reprobation!

A BEAUTIFUL SIMILE.

Upon yon mountain's distant head,
With spotless snows forever white,
Where all is still, and cold, and dead,—
Late shines the sun's departing light.
But far below those icy rocks,
The vales, in summer bloom array'd—
Woods full of birds, and fields of flocks
Are dim with mist, or dark with shade.
'Tis thus, from warm and kindly hearts,
And eyes where generous meanings burn,
Earliest the light of life departs,
And lingers with the cold and stern.

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